



State of South Carolina Office of the Governor

MARK SANFORD
GOVERNOR

POST OFFICE BOX 12267
COLUMBIA 29211

June 25, 2010

The Honorable André Bauer
President of the Senate
State House, First Floor, East Wing
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Mr. President and Members of the Senate:

I am hereby vetoing and returning without my approval S. 1392, R. 344, which creates special license plates imprinted with the following 16 messages: "Distinguished Service Medal," "Historic," Second Amendment," "Distinguished Service Cross," "Department of the Navy," "Parents and Spouses of Active Duty Overseas Veterans," "South Carolina Highway Patrol-Retired," "Boy Scouts of America," "Eagle Scouts of America," "I Support Libraries," "South Carolina Educator," "Coon Hunters," "Beach Music," "Citadel Alumni Association 'Big Red'," "Largemouth Bass, and "South Carolina Wildlife Federation." Additionally, this bill creates a "state flag" license plate and allows over 367 public and private high schools across the state to create their own license plates.

Let me be clear up front that our veto of this legislation is in no way based on the merit of any of the groups represented by these new license plates; however, we continue to be concerned with the General Assembly's desire to be involved in the license plate creation business. We believe it is more appropriate to allow the South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to issue license plates through the administrative process that is currently in place and has proven effective. For this very reason, two years ago we included in a letter that accompanied S. 1050, Act 297 of 2008, a signal that we would be vetoing any more legislation that created new license plates. A copy of that letter is attached to this veto message.

Currently our DMV issues 385 different classifications of license plates – an increase of 14 since this time last year (and 33 in the last two years), counting legislatively-mandated tags. By contrast, North Carolina issues 176 different license plates, Georgia issues 136 different license plates and Florida issues 114 different license plates. Recognizing the growing popularity of special license plates and the need for each group to seek approval in the form of legislation, in 2006, the General Assembly passed legislation (S. 613, Act 398) providing rules that certain nonprofit groups could utilize when seeking approval from the DMV for a new organization license plate. Our primary reason for supporting that legislation was to make it unnecessary to

pass legislation every time a group of citizens desired a special license plate. This framework has proven very successful as 25 groups have utilized this process since 2006, with 20 new tags having been approved. Seven new tags have been approved using this process over the last year – demonstrating that the DMV is capable of administering the creation of new license plates.

We believe that the successful framework that was established for nonprofit organizations should apply to all license plate applications. Ultimately, we do not believe that these are the types of policies the people of our state expect the General Assembly to be debating. The following is a sampling of special license plates created by the General Assembly: “In God We Trust,” “In Reason We Trust,” “Heritage Classic Golf,” “First in Golf,” “Surfrider Foundation,” “S.C. Elks Foundation,” “Lions International,” “NASCAR-Jeff Gordon,” “NASCAR-Rusty Wallace,” “No More Homeless Pets,” and “Gone Fishing.” My point with this list is not to diminish any group or its cause, but to make the point that we do not think the General Assembly needs to be spending its time approving license plates when the DMV can effectively administer this process. We believe the license tag creation process should be streamlined to charge the DMV with approving all license plates, thus allowing the General Assembly to focus on the more pressing issues facing South Carolina. This is particularly the case when the General Assembly’s time could be better spent addressing the \$1 billion general fund shortfall that the state faces next year and the long-term \$20 billion shortfall relating to the state’s retirement system.

We understand S. 1392 also gives the DMV the ability to place a wheelchair symbol on the “Veteran” license plates for handicapped veterans who do not qualify for the “Disabled Veteran” license plate. We would sign legislation that grants the DMV this authority if it were not attached to legislation that has the potential to bring the total of special plates offered by the DMV to more than 750.

Again, our concerns with S. 1392 are not with the substantive content of the special license plates created in this legislation, but instead with an unnecessarily complicated process that involves the General Assembly passing legislation designating evermore license plates. Given that the political process has accelerated on designating license plates again, we are going to ask that the General Assembly refrain from passing any more of these bills and instead allow the process to work through the DMV.

For these reasons, I am vetoing and returning without my approval S. 1392, R. 344.

Sincerely,



Mark Sanford

Attachment